Women Walk Home – But How?
A Women's Group in Cyprus seeks to reunite a Divided Nation

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Every society has a series of political conditions and issues that are regarded as of central importance. Such *defining issues* tend to be particularly strongly gendered and in such a way as to exclude women from public influence. That is, they are conspicuously not seen as *women's issues*.[1] In particular, major concerns related to foreign policy and to national identity and unity are unequivocally seen as of over-riding importance and labelled masculine. Women play significant roles as symbols and servants of the cause, transmitters of culture or victims of the struggle. But they are characteristically denied any agency in regards to such issues. As a consequence, most women's groups are uninvolved in the defining national issues.

However, there are a few women's groups that have a focus on isssues central to national politics. And those, I would argue, should be of particular interest to students of politics. The more so as, characteristically, such groups tend to represent alternatives to currently dominant policies as well as, by definition, to the customary personnel of political decision-making.[2] In their efforts, such organizations can illuminate aspects of political culture that need more attention from those attempting to understand the relevant politics. How such groups came into being, what they did, how they succeeded or (more often) failed: this can tell the analyst a great deal about what is going on. Thus, the involvement of the venerable League of Women Voters in questions of foreign and social policy could be seen as emblematic of American politics. It is well documented that the League has had an important politicizing impact on individual women, in part because of the group's resolute non-partisanship, which also explains why the group itself has had relatively little impact on policy as such.[3] The role of parties as a conduit of influence is thus highlighted. More dramatic international examples might be RAWA, which challenged the theocracy of the Taliban but had to do it outside of Afghanistan – and Women Walk Home, the subject of this paper, a group that confronted Greek Cypriot failure to negotiate a solution to the island's division.[4]

In 1989, 1995, and 1996 I interviewed nearly all of the organizers of the group who called themselves Women Walk Home. In 1975 and again in the years 1987-89 these women, Greek Cypriots by birth or marriage, mobilized several thousand women in an attempt to end the partition of Cyprus that has been in place since 1974.[5] I found what they had to say fascinating, especially when amplified by material gathered from a sample of their followers. But the question has to be: who cares? Or, more formally, why does this obscure organization merit scholarly attention, especially from political scientists?

After all, the impact of the group has been slight. A few people have heard of Women Walk Home (WWH), for they managed to garner a certain amount of attention in the international media. In addition, WWH activity and a woman central among its leaders generated and won a significant case in the European Commission of Human Rights (Loizidou vs. Turkey). But is this worth our careful attention, rather than simply some appropriate degree of applause? It is true that, a quarter of a century later than the activities of WWH, there is now increasing momentum towards reunification and more interaction between the two sectors of the divided nation of Cyprus. But it would be hard to argue that WWH has significant responsibility for these changes. And indeed its members make no such claim. Nor does it seem to be the case, as feminist observers might hope, that the actions carried on by WWH increased the involvement of Cypriot women in conventional political activity or in radical or other informal politics.[6] And Cyprus is still divided.

Those women who participated in WWH, even if only to the extent of taking part in one of the *borias,* their peaceful marches crossing the partition line in Cyprus, found it a significant experience. But they themselves would be the last to validate their activities in terms of bonding and learning – activism as therapy. Indeed, they told me they felt that their group had been a failure.

Yet WWH is worth studying for several reasons. This is not just because it is possible to argue that anything that has happened is interesting, and especially the often-overlooked activities of women. In respect to WWH, these are the claims for attention presented by history or political science writ large, but also those of the more specific area of analysis that we call subaltern studies. Cyprus was, successively, part of nearly every Eurasian empire, most importantly the Turkish and the British. Ottoman Turkey bequeathed to the island a Muslim minority that shared with the Greek Orthodox majority a tradition of clerical authority and the subordination of women. A century of British imperial administration did little to change women's role, nor did a decade of Church-dominated anti-imperialism swiftly followed by an ethnically-based civil war and partition.

In addition, I would be prepared to say that any activist women's group will repay scholarly attention from political scientists as well as from historians. Such organizations are part of the cumulative process by which women move into political awareness and participation. The result, which is still far from complete, constitutes a massive transformation of social and political life. Furthermore, even when women's organizations operate solely within that sphere we label civil society, or on a more domestic level that has no apparent linkages at all to mainstream electoral or radical politics, their activities underlie the ones political scientists normally study. Women's activist groups thus represent possibilities for both a revaluation and a reconstruction, not just of gender roles, but of politics itself.[7]

So far, of course, these are arguments that will appeal mainly to those, political scientists or not, who already have some commitment to studying women. Even though such concerns should interest all political scientists, so that any study of a political system ought to include the activities of women's groups, it is still true that it is primarily from the perspective of a specifically *feminist* political scientist that groups organized and run by women seem worthy of analysis. That is, only a few of us believe that the study of women's groups is relevant to understanding, not just the possibilities and constraints of gender-based activism, but also the uses of power more generally

So that although WWH should be of interest in the broad contexts of subaltern studies, the contemporary transformations of politics, and the proper understanding of the nature of power, I would not expect many of my political science colleagues to be responsive to this claim.

I want, however, to make an even more ambitious claim for the study of women's organizations. This paper uses WWH as an example to support the argument that the study of women's groups can illuminate the wider study of politics. I shall argue that the emergence of WWH and its failure draw attention to key elements of the local political situation. This is a women's group that focused on the central, defining questions of its society. There can be disagreement about just how important women's or feminist issues are or should be for Cyprus, but no-one can dispute the fact that the one central issue for politics in Cyprus since 1974 has been the de facto partition of the island because of the

Turkish occupation of the northern section of it. WWH's goal, in its own words, was "the reunification of the divided island republic of Cyprus and the peaceful coexistence, without outside interference or artificial barriers, of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities."[8] That is the goal of *all* politics in Greek Cyprus, a defining issue if there ever was one.

Women Walk Home is one of those women's groups whose activities are directed towards central and "masculine" political issues. I shall argue that, although they could not resolve the problem of reunification of Cyprus, their own history casts light on just why that problem has been so difficult to resolve.

I

We need to start this discussion with a short summary of recent political history in Cyprus and a description of the activities of Women Walk Home. It is almost impossible to present this history in a way acceptable to all or even many of the participants, but the outline of events is necessary for this discussion, however disputed the details and the interpretation.[9]

Cyprus is a small island, 44 miles from Turkey and 240 miles from the nearest Greek island, about 400 miles from the Greek mainland. It has always been the strategic key to the eastern Mediterranean and the Bosporus. From the Turkish Empire it inherited an ethnic differentiation of what is now about 800,000 people into approximately 80% Greek-speaking, Greek Orthodox citizens (Greek Cypriots)and 18% Turkish-speaking, Muslim citizens (Turkish Cypriots).[10] Leased to Britain by the Ottomans in 1878, it became a British possession when Turkey entered the First World War. On basis of the old Turkish *millet* system, the British perpetuated an ethnically divided educational, economic, and political structure that reinforced communal differences. The Greek Cypriots' anti-imperialist struggle, which became violent in 1955, had the goal of *enosis*, merger with the Greek nation that had emerged from the ruins of the Turkish Empire. Turkey and Turkish Cypriots developed in response a preference for partition of the island. Instead, after an appeal to the UN, Cyprus was made independent in 1960 under a carefully devised, internationally monitored consociational constitution that divided governmental responsibilities between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Partners in NATO though bitter rivals, Greece, and Turkey joined Britain as authors and joint guarantors of the settlement, which was imposed against the will of the ethnic communities on the island Not surprisingly, the constitution did not work. Three years later Cyprus descended into undeclared, low-level inter-communal civil war fuelled by military supplies, militia, and encouragement from both "mother" countries. As a result, there was increasing consolidation and separation of the two ethnic communities, in part enforced by a UN presence.[11]

In 1974, a briefly successful military coup in Cyprus fomented by the rightwing regime then in power in Greece was followed by a Turkish military incursion seen by Turkish Cypriots as a rescue mission and Greek Cypriots as an invasion. The results included the overthrow of the Greek junta. In Cyprus a series of population movements, some voluntary but most not, under conditions of violence and fear, distributed Turkish Cypriots north and Greek Cypriots south of an impassable, bitterly resented partition Line. In the northern 37% of the island, continued Turkish military occupation produced proclamation of a Turkish Cypriot national entity (isolated, boycotted, illegitimate in international law, but a reality on the ground). Patrolled by the United Nations, the Line

was enforced militarily by governments on both sides. Even today (the fall of 2005) Turkish troops and Turkish subsidies still control the northern part of the island, though visiting and working across the Line has become somewhat easier, especially since Cyprus became part of the European Union in 2004. Earlier in 2004, the UN managed to administer a referendum (on what was called the Annan Plan) that would have reunited Cyprus before its accession to the EU; the Greek Cypriots rejected it and it failed. Today, though not in the period of WWH, the complicated implications of Turkey's difficult accession to the European Union loom over all.

The history of Women Walk Home begins a few months after the coup and the Turkish incursion. In 1975, as today, national unity and national identity were the overwhelmingly important influences on Cypriot politics – a politics, on both sides of the Line that divides the island, in which women play virtually no active role. However, in 1975, International Women's Year was a convenient prop and support when a small group of British women married to Greek Cypriots decided to organize a protest against the partition. They were able to mobilize a march of some 30,000 women, including a significant number of international feminist celebrities and women members of national parliaments and the European parliament. Central to the effort were Greek Cypriot women refugees from the Turkish-occupied north, who hoped to return to their homes. The marchers were stopped short of their goal by United Nations peace-keepers.

This first march of the Cypriot women was the biggest anti-partition demonstration ever to occur in Cyprus. But it was a women's happening only in the sense that women initiated and ran it and no men were included among the marchers. This was an official protest. The women's auxiliaries of the political parties had been contacted by the action's organizers, and largely supported the action, as did the government led by Archbishop Makarios. A follow-up petition sent to the Cypriot government, the British, and the UN drew no response.[12] The partition continued, and became more entrenched.

By a relatively early date after the Turkish occupation, Greek Cypriot negotiators reluctantly agreed with their Turkish Cypriot counterparts that it was going to be necessary to reconstruct the constitution and to drop the incompatible community goals of a Greek-dominated unitary structure or partition into two states. Instead, there would have to be some sort of ethnically- and geographically-defined federation that would limit the ambitions of the more fervent on both sides: "bicommunal" and "bizonal."[13] But in spite of UN and other initiatives, repeated efforts at negotiation produced no meaningful further results. Since the UN was capable of effectively policing the Line, the division looked more and more entrenched. Germany had not yet been united. The Cold War was still on, and because of its importance to NATO Turkey had leverage that gave its military investment in Cyprus a great and, for Greek Cypriots, menacing significance. Women Walk Home was a response to this rather frightening stasis. The target was the Greek Cypriot leaders and, beyond them, the international community. They hoped, it seems, for renewed and more serious negotiations that would reunify the island.

In 1987 two of the women centrally involved in the 1975 march reorganized the group that had come together then. In the process they created something rather different and more significant. "Women Walk Home" had been the slogan for the march towards the UN-patrolled dividing line that kept refugee Greek Cypriots out of the Turkish-controlled city of Famagusta on the eastern coast of Cyprus; "Women Walk Home" became the name of an organization that in 1987 to 1989 carried out five women's marches including three that managed to cross the armed and patrolled dividing line,

something not done before nor to any substantial degree since. Often, they used a simple argument: we are entitled to free movement in our own country. They then proceeded to demonstrate that such movement was not possible. Stopped by armed soldiers, they made visible the military dimensions of the barriers; coming from the south, they were stopped by the representatives of the Turkish occupation, underlining the role of Turkey and its forces.

To the refugee women who were in effect WWH's foot-soldiers, the message was simple: come, walk home with us. A highly effective procedure was developed after the first tentative and unsuccessful attempt to cross the Line near the divided capital city of Nicosia. On this occasion, on June 18, 1987, about 300 women made their way into the demilitarized, UN-patrolled buffer zone that surrounds the Line, and into the media. This march had been dangerous, largely because of uncertainty about how Turkish and Turkish Cypriot troops might react. To defuse the situation, from then on WWH announced publicly in advance the date of each additional attempt though not the intended place. In November of the same year, accordingly, some 350 women crossed the Line itself and confronted armed Turkish troops; a number of celebrities and foreigners were present, echoing the 1975 march and enhancing media appeal. In WWH's final and biggest success, on March 19, 1989, about 1000 women crossed the Line at the village of Achna and another 2000 went across via a high hillside at Lymbia. This time a number were arrested and briefly detained by the Turkish military. In addition, in June of 1988 about 50 women flew from Cyprus to Athens and used a symbolic occupation of the Parthenon to draw attention to the situation of Cyprus on the occasion of a meeting of Greek and Turkish leaders in Cyprus. So that a good deal of real and metaphorical and very visible walking went on. But it must be remembered that the real goal of the group is to be found in its full name: Women Walk Home for a United Cyprus. And this is the impact that was desired.

WWH's events were carefully planned, minutely supervised, and well publicized. Aspects of almost all were captured in two skilful videos. Members of the group also participated in some of the cross-communal or bi-communal activities that, over the years, have attempted to draw together Greek and Turkish Cypriots, usually under international auspices, often outside of Cyprus. In addition, they became active in the network of research and conferences related to the international women's peace movement and related academic research. The important case, Loizidou vs. Turkey, was started in 1989, after Titina Loizides, a central organizer in WWH, was among those detained by Turkish authorities during the *boria* at Lymbia. A significant challenge to the legitimacy of the occupation, it was, in 1998, successful in its appeal to the European Commission of Human Rights.

By July 1989 the group was dead. It had fractured, and WWH as such never appeared in public again. That month, under the leadership of a subset of nationalist political women who had previously been part of WWH, a mixed-sex demonstration moved across the dividing line in Nicosia itself, brandishing nationalist symbols and provoking Turkish violence. Many (though not members of WWH) remember that last march as an activity of WWH. But it was very different.

The activities of WWH, by policy, were not just separate from mainstream and particularly partisan politics but resolutely dissociated from them, explicitly rejecting the symbols of Greek Cypriot nationalism, and calling for reconciliation between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. In concrete terms, this meant that all the participants were women, conspicuously unarmed and non-resistant. Importantly, they used white flags rather than

the rarely seen Cyprus flag or the more common Greek blue-and-white - leaders of the WWH marches scanned participants with anxiety lest Greek flags might be smuggled in – and their white banners were lettered with Turkish as well as Greek and English announcements that "we come in peace." WWH also made strenuous efforts to contact Turkish Cypriot women. These symbolic decisions had heavy loading, and were the subject of continuing discussion and dispute within WWH. In terms of normal politics in the southern, unoccupied part of Cyprus, the refusal to assert Cypriot Hellenism was virtually unacceptable, and social interaction and cooperation with Turkish Cypriots, what in Cyprus is called "rapprochement," was marginal, even disreputable.

And here I want to draw back from description, in order to demonstrate with this case how analysis of women's activism can provide insights into some of the most resistant cruxes of world politics. In the following discussion, I focus on influences on the *Greek* Cypriots as contrasted with Turkish Cypriots. That is the community within which WWH rose and fell.

II

With (Greek) Cyprus, then, looking at WWH, we can see the major impact for the Cyprus settlement of the following things that made WWH possible (and, in some cases, played a major role in its ineffectiveness): (1) monopoly of politics by political parties, (2) a large refugee presence, of whom the majority were women, (3) small scale and small distances, (4) a low level of actual violence connected with politics in general and the partition line in particular (this in spite of a very violent history and militarization of key policy issues), and (4) relative economic prosperity in the south, enjoyed by Greek Cypriots including some refugee entrepreneurs. In my view, these are also the main factors that inhibited Greek Cypriot policy-makers from resolving the issue of partition.

I shall begin with political structure, or, more specifically, the system of political parties in Greek Cyprus.

Political parties in Cyprus were permitted, even encouraged by the British as early as 1941. Like the trade unions and agricultural cooperatives that became prominent then, they were primarily organized around ethnic identity. This meant that all the Greek Cypriot parties, including the strong Communist Party, were *enosist*, oriented towards union with the Greek nation. After independence, the array soon widened to accommodate as many as eight political parties at any given time, the larger ones with women's and youth groups. Dissatisfied with the imposed constitution, they gradually moved from the impossible goal of union with Greece to a focus on institutionalizing a Hellenic identity and a unitary government for the island. In 1974 they acquired the additional goal of expulsion of the Turks – a policy with strong resonance for the Greek Cypriots now consolidated south of the line. Women were expected to reinforce that goal and identity, not move across it. There were only tiny and non-influential networks aimed at anything more, such as bi-communalism or a Cypriot, as contrasted with a Hellenic identity. The Cypriot flag was rarely flown, and if it was, it had a Greek flag with it. There was virtually no non-partisan political activity, but the Greek Orthodox church played a strong role in political and civic life.

It was easy for the organizers of WWH, beginning in 1975, to contact activist women, such as they were, through the existing partisan and religious networks that had supported and assisted the 1975 walk. Contacts made at that time through the usually docile women's groups facilitated reaching women later, in 1987, in a way that the

parties (not to mention the church) certainly would not have approved of. WWH described itself, after all, as "an independent non-party movement of Greek Cypriot women…."[14] For a while, partisan underestimation of the possible role of women meant indifference or at least lack of attention. When the parties became hostile, it was the rare woman activist who would defy them.

Some party women were involved with WWH at a leadership level. Not members of the parties' women's auxiliaries, but of the parties themselves, they had political ambitions that they found difficult to realize through the parties.[15] But they were loyal to them. Such women sought, without success, to push WWH towards a more nationalistic stance. The ones who finally destroyed WWH, they initially attempted to influence the group from within; they were particularly opposed to any attempts to co-operate with Turkish Cypriots. When the final, relatively triumphant walks in took place in March 1989, the parties seem to have decided that such activities were worth co-opting. When they then chose to use WWH, women who were partisan loyalists were well placed for take-over. One told me with pride that they could have done so at any time, since they had only to bring in busloads of party women for any vote.

So that the partisan structures in Cyprus both facilitated and finally doomed the organization of WWH. The parties' structure and their commitment to a limited set of goals meant they could, briefly, be bypassed and even used. But they could not be influenced by any sort of outside influence. And they monopolized political life. Grass-roots protest or pressure, of whatever kind, was unlikely to have significant impact.

III

The refugee situation had a similar mix of possibilities and impossibilities for anyone hoping to produce reunification. As is usual, the large majority of the refugees in Cyprus, on both side of the Line, were women and children.[16] Women refugees in particular were perceived by politicians, again on both sides of the Line, as symbols of victimization and cultural uniqueness. Which of course they were, and they had indeed experienced rape and, more often, deep fear of it, as well as the losses, the deaths (including those officially still missing a generation later) and displacement.[17] These roles were culturally constructed, however, as passive. Women had participated in the *enosis* struggles of the 1950s, but the symbols of that conflict were male as were the main actors. In the inter-communal conflicts of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the coup, incursion, and resistance in 1974 and after. the visible actors and especially the heroes were masculine and military.[18] So too was the policing of the Line. Universal military service (for men only) on both sides of the Line reinforced the stereotypes. But refugee-as-victim could not tap displaced women's deep psychological yearning for some remedy to the division of the island. It does not seem likely that the motivation was, for most, a practical expectation of return of previous conditions; more powerful were a sense of being uprooted and frustration with the lack of normality.[19]

At the same time, there was a significant emotional tie to the old homes, often literally visible across the Line. So that refugee women could indeed be mobilized to try to at least visit the places where they had come from. The accounts of the *borias*, including the videos, include many touching scenes of women back for the first time since 1974, walking into ruined homes with old photo albums lying on the floor, singing ecstatically in churches they had not revisited for over a decade, asking Turkish Cypriots how the olive trees were doing. Unfortunately, these images merely reinforced the role of women as suppliants, victims, symbols. The visual images include a multitude of

black-clad Greek widows and exiles. A widely reproduced photograph echoes, consciously or not, the famous La Pasionara; another, on one of the videos, shows a young, articulate, and desperately unhappy daughter of the Attalides family (a name resonant in Greek history). These all played well but they did not move anyone closer to reunification. Nor did the marching of the refugee women.

For what else could the refugee women be mobilized for? In mainstream political terms, well before the 1980s, the actual refugees had been transformed into a "refugee issue" that was part of what was to be negotiated. The echo from other divisions is obvious: Palestine, Germany. By the 1980s it had ceased to be possible for anything like the whole refugee population to "return" to their lost homes. The role of refugees in Cypriot politics was confined to the refugee associations and those representatives of the lost districts of Kyrenia, Lefkosa, and Greek Famagusta who sit in the Cypriot (Greek Cypriot) parliament. And here again party control continues paramount, and refugee women relatively inactive.

Thus there was no way to translate the emotions or even the acts of the refugee women into any pressure on mainstream politics. The more so as these women would not necessarily have favoured the bi-communal and virtually pacifist line that WWH advocated. In the 2004 referendum on the Annan Plan for reunification, exit polls suggest that Greek Cypriot women were slightly more opposed than men.[20]

IV

This leads to the third feature of Cypriot politics that both facilitated and doomed WWH: scale. Distances are, from any external perspective, minute; the island is only 138 miles long and, at its greatest width, 59 miles across. In one morning I was driven to see the sites of the *borias,* arriving no more than usually late for an afternoon appointment in Nicosia. The Line could always be driven or walked to in minutes, though the minefields and the opposing troops kept civilians at a distance. So that it was easy to gather women together to plan or to act. The numbers involved were small in absolute terms. Because a large proportion of the political elite knew or was related to each other, contacts were easy to make and to sustain. At the same time, in a small island with a small political class, the small core of dedicated organizers of WWH was a substantial group; so were the marchers. Thirty is a lot of leaders in the context of Cyprus, even a few hundred a lot of women. A few busloads of protesters amounted to a potential mob.

On the other hand, a very few dissidents were able to be disruptive and then destructive in a way that would have been more difficult in a larger context geographically and demographically. Personal connections, which had helped the group to come together, also generated embittered criticisms, in particular for WWH's allegedly being run by foreigners. Here personal and media comments singled out the two British women who were among WWH's leaders. Never mind that one had become a refugee driven out of Famagusta along with her Greek Cypriot husband, while the other was born and raised in Cyprus and her Greek Cypriot husband's family was notable in many ways, including its role in the *enosis* struggles. Issues of scale also meant that when a crucial few of the original organizers lost heart or were diverted by personal concerns, the group foundered.

Translated to issues of negotiation and settlement, scale meant, also that a very small group of people dominated the proceedings. In his lifetime, Archbishop Makarios

was the single key figure, leader of the autocephalous church of Cyprus. anti-imperialist and among the founders of the non-aligned bloc, first president of Cyprus. Only with his death could successors appear, and many of them were the men who had been involved in the founding of the republic. None of them were very responsive to the sorts of arguments that were typical of WWH and all of them were unhappy about popular movements and mass demonstrations such as WWH was intent on organizing. Mere size might have produced diversity and possible support for WWH or its policies; in Cyprus that possibility did not exist.

V

Related to the issues of scale are the issues related to the perceived and actual levels of violence and militarization of the Cyprus situation – which are not identical.

The Line itself is a military one as well as one patrolled by the unarmed Blue Helmets. There is a no-go border zone mostly cleared of houses. It is mined. In the south, armed National Service Greek Cypriot troops still back up the UN and behind them are police and Greek troops proper.[21] On the other side, there are Turkish and National Service Turkish Cypriot troops as well as, when needed, Turkish Cypriot policemen. This is also a very masculine line. Among all of those enforcing it, the only female figures to be seen are an occasional woman police officer on the Turkish side.

Cypriots on both sides of the border tend to assimilate their situation to those in other places. In the process, over the years they have made the situation seem more violent than it really is. Certainly the Turkish incursion of 1974 was a military one, and a destructive one, and the armed truce since is frightening. But the rhetoric is alarmist. Both communities talk about "ethnic cleansing." The Greek mayor of Nicosia in the 1980s and 1990s regularly compared the division of his city to that of Berlin. I refer deliberately to the Turkish "incursion" into the north that became an occupation, but it is always described as "invasion" by those in the south (a rescue operation by those in the north). Greek Cypriot women, especially the refugees who came from small, relatively isolated villages, had, in addition, a historically-derived stereotype of Turks as rapists and murderers.

Going across the Line was initially thus a very daunting enterprise. It was definitely risky – and definitely perceived as dangerous. The marchers confronted armed troops, after all, including jittery adolescents doing their national service. Women who had young children at the time told me of the letters they left and the arrangements they made about the children. Apart from anxieties about rape and abuse, there was enough pushing and shoving on the high hilltop at Lymbia that one woman suffered a broken leg and others were bruised and cut. The dissident march at Ayios Kassianos in 1989 expected and indeed provoked a degree of violence; I was shown photos of injuries.

However, even at Ayios Kassianos there was sufficient publicity to reduce actual danger considerably, and at WWH's major *borias* there was always an ambulance and doctor present, as well as considerable press and enough prominent foreigners to afford protection. And it is important to notice some of the less sensational aspects or episodes of the actual conflict of 1974 and its aftermaths. Thus, the most notorious expulsion of Greeks from the north - the population of Varosha, the Greek section of Famagusta - was not followed by Turkish or Turkish Cypriot occupation of the abandoned homes and hotels, still empty today more than a quarter of a century later. And the gathering of Turkish Cypriot populations in the south (and to a lesser extent, Greek Cypriot in the

north) into groupings that were later easily movable, was initially defensive, guided by community leaders on both sides. There were no state-approved or –supported rapes or executions in the pattern that the Balkans have made so familiar.[22] In addition, unlike the situation in the days of the Berlin wall, the two sectors of the divided capital of Cyprus have - very quietly – cooperated over the years of the partition of the island, first about shared sewage facilities and then for other activities including a shared municipal redevelopment plan that coordinates down to the level of selection of paving stones and public lighting fixtures.[23] It also seems clear that the Turkish army entered Cyprus in 1974 with entitlement under the constitutive treaties of the Cypriot Republic, after a Greek-inspired coup put in place an illegal Hellenizing government headed by a notorious former terrorist known for attacks on Turkish Cypriots.[24]

The continued Turkish military presence and occupation of about 40% of the island is a different matter, and Loizidou vs. Turkey is one of a number of legal decisions that have confirmed that the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, recognized only by Turkey, is controlled by Turkey. But there is nevertheless a lively political life in the north. And the situation of the island, admitted to the European Union while one half is under occupation by an applicant to that union – that is surely unique, as is the virtually complete absence of fatalities in the area of the partition line.[25] All the same, just as *enosis* was, finally, forced into the UN template of independence, so too divided Cyprus is perceived and presented in the more violent tropes of other divided nations and refugee populations. Violence remains a memory and a threat but not a constant reality. Hence the possibility of the walks and their non-violent outcomes.

Of course, the low level of risk for the *borias* also reduced the impact of the action. There were no martyrs (WWH was cynically advised to provide some). And all the while the military/strategic dimensions of the situation that had side-lined women were lurking there ready to disapprove of and ultimately discount any action that they might undertake – particularly any deliberately non- or anti-military action. Women could not take military action themselves, since they were not included in the network of universal military training or the political positions that grew out of that and controlled the island's military/strategic policies. It is well known that the Turkish military has historically had the final say in Turkish politics and therefore, until recently, in the Turkish and therefore Turkish Cypriot politics related to Cyprus. It is hard to avoid the observation that the same is true of Greek and Greek Cypriot politics, though there it is less overt except in the years of the junta and in relation to the Cypriot coup of 1974 that ended that regime. In the end, peaceful marches were bound to be perceived as irrelevant to the very situation that had motivated them and made them possible. Security concerns, centred on distrust of Turkish intentions, continue dominant, and played a major role in the Greek Cypriot rejection of the Annan Plan.[26] There can be no doubt that they played and play a major role in the lack of a negotiated settlement.

VI

Thus the activities of WWH were facilitated and then destroyed by, to review, the nature of partisan and civil society structures, the refugee situation, the scale of the setting, and also the military but not actively violent dimensions of the central situation. The final point to be made is about the effects of the prosperity of the southern fragment of the island nation, which inherited and developed the main economic resources of the island, in particular its tourism. This prosperity vastly increased the availability of women for mobilization. It drew women into the labour force and increased their education, contacts, and resources for organization more broadly, in the classic pattern

seen worldwide. The relocation of the refugees from the north meant also that many women among them were driven, even if unwillingly, into the active labour force. Moved from small isolated villages, they and their children were exposed to urban education and media. Those influences also have a classic impact in activation of women as potential political actors. The leaders of WWH were well-educated women with, in most cases, active professional lives. Many were involved with the booming tourism industry in the south, while others were entrepreneurs or independent businesswomen; one was a newspaper writer, one active in Cyprus television. They, like so many others in the south, had resources at their disposal for civic life.

At the same time, however, post-1974 also created a class structure, or at least a class interest in the south, that in some ways militated against reunification. Although at least one qualified observer has doubted the solidity of the economic miracle of the south, the contrast to the north is striking. With the most appealing coastlines of Cyprus inaccessible except through Turkey, the less promising beaches of the south coast were rapidly (if indiscriminatingly) developed, while the unsettled condition of Lebanon brought banking and commerce to the island. The British bases continue to be a source of employment and income.[27]

There were strong economic implications in the founding constitution (suspended in 1963 and inactive sooner). Communal shares in political, military, and bureaucratic power had been carefully meted out with minimal input from any of the Cypriots. In all cases the actual percentage share of the Turkish Cypriots in demographic terms was rounded up substantially. Other economic resources were to be allocated under the same rules. The resultant allocation to the minority community of a disproportionate share of the civil service, police, and military positions loomed large in relation to the small Cyprus workforce. As well, there was the thorny issue of apportionment of development funds, given that the Turkish Cypriot community was far less economically modernized. A study of municipalities seems to demonstrate that a reluctance to share economic resources played a major role in the breakdown of the 1960 constitution.[28] The economic issues related to partition are demonstrated clearly now in the discussions of just how the breakaway businessmen of the north are to be treated while "Cyprus" is part of the EU but the north is still under Turkish occupation.[29]

In the northern part of the island, there were strong economic incentives for reunification. So that when the UN prepared a plan for reunification that went to an island-wide referendum, for this and other reasons, there was an amazing demonstration of popular support for it in the north, quite apart from the vote of approval when the time came.[30] But in the south, the government opposed the plan, and the only campaign addressed to the public focused on reasons for voting *oxi*, no. It seems that those central to political life have had an interest in drawing out the division. For reasons including their economic future, many of the Greek Cypriot population obviously agreed. No idealistic Greek Cypriot or bi-communal grass-roots mobilization for reunion had much chance of impact on such considerations.

VII

Thus, looking at WWH we see five areas where local conditions facilitated but also, in several cases, worked to destroy the organization. I would argue that they direct our attention to conditions in Greek Cyprus that have until now blocked a solution for Cyprus: hegemonic partisan structures with an ethnic and nationalistic basis; refugees, mostly women who were mostly not politically involved or activated; scale; non-violent

politics with a violent history and major military and strategic undertones; prosperity and economic interests in the south.

The absence of a reunifying settlement is, of course, also related to a number of features of politics external to the Greek part of Cyprus. Greek, Turkish, United States, and British involvements have constrained possibilities; there is a very large literature dealing with all this and, more recently, the important and difficult relationship of Turkey, Muslim but secular, with European institutions. Nor should the intransigence of the founding leaders of the Turkish Cypriots be overlooked. But within this context many observers have felt that reluctance on the part of the Greek Cypriots added a final, decisive element to the failure to achieve reunification.

What Women Walk Home did was to take a policy goal imaginable but unrealized in normal politics, reformulate it in terms likely to appeal most to women, and employ tactics appropriate to women under the local conditions of politics. Nationalistic symbols along with partisan politics were rejected as masculine and unproductive. The organizers of WWH perceived women not as maternalistic symbols of peace or symbols of a national tradition, but rather as instruments of change – change to be achieved in a way particularly appropriate for women and unusable under current conditions by men. In a Cyprus where political conditions seemed deadlocked, where grass-roots protest or intervention was virtually blocked by local patterns of political action, women – absent from Cypriot politics at any decision-making level – were to become agents of consciousness-raising and mass action, first for themselves and then for a larger population.

It didn't work. But why it got so far and why it then failed – these together direct us to the Greek Cypriot part of the failure of the long string of negotiations about reunification. And perhaps it can help us to understand the otherwise baffling behaviour of the Greek Cypriot leadership when they encouraged rejection of the Annan Plan and now attempt to deal with the aftermath.

WOMEN WALK HOME - ACTIVITIES

April 21, 1975 – first women's march, to Dherynia (near Varosha, the abandoned Greek Cypriot sector of Famagusta); turned back by UN troops; about 20,000 to 25,000 women including many celebrities from overseas; supported by the government of Cyprus, as the later walks will not be

June 15, 1987 – Women Walk Home (WWH) at Aronas, near Nicosia; stopped in buffer zone; about 300-350 women

November 23, 1987 - WWH at Ayios Pavlos; first successful entry into occupied Cyprus and confrontation with armed Turkish soldiers; several hundred women including celebrities and foreigners

June 1988 - WWH demonstration in Athens (at the Acropolis) on the occasion of meeting of Greek and Turkish leaders

March 19, 1989 - WWH at Achna (1000) and Lymbia (2000); 54 (including 4 reporters) arrested by Turks

July 19-21, 1989 – right-wing spin-off of WWH at Ayios Kassianos on the dividing line in Nicosia; about 1000, in 2 groups, of which about 100 made it into buffer zone; about 100 (including 4 reporters) arrested; Turkish trooops crossed into buffer zone; violence; use of Greek flags and anthems, anti-Turkish slogans; includes bishop and other men

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[1]

NOTES

Northrop gives a fascinating example of the very rare case in which issues of modernization and class transformation came to focus, disastrously, on the situation of women (in Soviet Uzbekistan).

[2] Such opposition may also be covert or implicit, such as (in India) SEWA's campaigns to develop leadership skills as well as resources among self-employed urban women and unemployed rural ones, or (in Japan) the organizations that mobilize women consumers and (in Canada) the federalist activities of women's groups, especially in Québec.

[3] The League has played a major role in motivating and training women who then became active and influential in electoral politics at all levels. But in recent years the League has virtually lost its public role as a policy critic.

[4] On the League, see Black (1989); for SEWA, Rose and Crowell. My concern is with autonomous women's groups, whatever their origin, not the women's wings of e.g. the Hindu Nationalists in India, or the Women in Green who support the settlers in the Occupied Territories in Palestine. Nor am I thinking of the historic international women's peace movement, which usually prides itself in keeping its distance from specific national policy issues.

[5] About 30 women were centrally involved as organizers. Some 3-4000 women participated in the last marches in March1989 (out of a population of about 300, 000 Greek Cypriot women). Cyprus census 1982, cited in Cyprus National Report to the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, September 1995.

[6] As Emily Markides optimistically argues (7). The evidence of my survey material suggest otherwise.

[7] We discuss this at length in Black and Brandt.

[8] http://www.cyprus.com.cy/chronology.htm, posted 07/21/99.

[9] See Black, 1977, for a fuller discussion of the earlier political history of Cyprus, including a discussion of the problems with sources.

[10] There are also tiny minority comunities, some of them very old (Maronites, Armenians, and Latin Christians) as well as legal and illegal migrant workers, mainly from Eastern Europe, and a growing number of expatriates, mostly retirees. They comprise about 5% of thepeopulation and the older minorities are usually included in the figures given for the "Greek Cypriots." Robertson, 40. None of these seem to play any significant role in the island's politics. Cockburn has some discussion of women "guest workers" and Hadjipavlou included Maronite, Armenian, and Latin women in her study.

[11] This is an oversimplification of a postwar and then postcolonial history loomed over by the historical, continuing rivalry of Greece and Turkey, and the important involvement and strategic concerns of both the United Kingdom and the United States. The UK maintains sovereign military bases in Cyprus to this day. The foundational treaties entitled Greece and Turkey to maintain troop contingents on the island and all three guarantors to intervene militarily. Diana Markides' accountof the development of separate municipalities demonstrates effectively in microcosm (from a Greek Cypriot perspective) the process of breakdown of the constitution; Thubron gives the best account of conditions in the early 1970s.

[12] Lasán, 53.

[13] Greek and Turkish Cypriots signed a statement to this effect in 1977.

[14] http://www.cyprus.com.cy/chronology.htm, posted 07/21/99

[15] One, but only one leader of a women's (party) auxiliary defied her party to continue as an active, central participant in WWH. She was also a refugee entrepreneur, a rarity among Cypriot women in many respects.

[16] The (Greek Cypriot) government of Cyprus gives the figure of 201,000 refugees in 1974. "The Refugees of Cyprus."

[17] Cultural attitudes about women show most clearly in relation to those women married or engaged to the men still missing from the war. were in a specific sort of social limbo charcteristic of Mediterranean society. Anthias, 162. The government of Cyprus gives the figure of 1,619 missing, but this includes some women and children (Pancyprian Committee, 5). In 2005 one of the signs of movement towards a settlement was revival of a bi-communal commission to deal with the fate of the missing.

[18] Lasán documents the activism of Cypriot women in the *enosis* struggles, in the period following the establishment of the Republic, and through to the present situation, but the women she writes about are not celebrated elsewhere.

[19] Cockburn suggests that there was a specific economic loss suffered by displaced women, who lost their "dowry" homes that had given them a measure of autonomy" (82; also Anthias, 161).

[20] On the other hand, the refugee constituencies were slightly more favourable to the Annan Plan than the rest of southern Cyprus, and Dherynia, just across the line from Famagusta, presumably with a high percentage of refugees, was the only sourthern municipality to give it majority support. Friends of Cyprus, "Referendums' Statistics," 24 and see www:elektor.org.

[21] Under Cyprus's constitutive treaty, all three guarantors have troops posted on the island. Because WWH came to the Line from the south, their activities did not reflect the Greek military presence on that side. Nor was it generally known how persistently the Greek Cypriot authorities, including the military, tried to dissuade and then to head off the *borias*.

[22] See Thubron. The few Greek Cypriots remaining in the north after the incursion were "enclaved," cutoff and deprived of communal services, but nothing worse. The south is particularly resentful of the last large-scale removal of Turkish Cypriots, who had taken refuge in the British base areas and were airlifted to Turkey and then to northern Turkish-controlled Cyprus.

[23] Diana Markides, 177. Interview in 1995 with Lellos Dmetriades, Mayor of (Greek) Nicosia. Lasán documents the other cross-line cooperation, mentioned also inCockburn.

[24] The British, co-guarantors, refused a Turkish request to intervene.

[25] Only two deaths gave ever occurred there.

[26] See the comments of Helen Soteriou, a leader of WWH who neverthless finally voted in favour of the Annan Plan.

[27] See Christodoulou and Government of Cyprus, Cyprus National Report.

[28] See Diana Markides. This is my interpretation, not the author's.

[29] See Damdelen.

[30] About 75% of Greek Cypriots voted against the Annan Plan, about 65% of Turkish Cypriots voted for it. In the north unprecedented demonstrations supported the plan and elections brought in new governments favouring it.